

Rockford Historic Preservation Commission

June 2, 2009 – 6:00 PM
Conference Room B
Rockford City Hall

Present Sally Faber, Laura Bachelder, Maureen Flanagan, Mark McInnis

Absent Doug Mark, Tom Graceffa, David Hagney

Staff Ginny Gregory

Others Charles Ecker

Meeting of the Rockford Historic Preservation Commission

Approval of Minutes

Maureen Flanagan made a **MOTION** to **APPROVE** the minutes for the meeting of May 5, 2009 as submitted. The motion was seconded by Sally Faber and **CARRIED** by a vote of 4-0.

NEW BUSINESS

Certificate of Appropriateness –1725 Arlington Avenue

Charles Ecker stated he would like to put a wooden fence around the back of his house. Ginny pointed out the style and gate of the fence that would be located between the house and the garage and mentioned there was a drawing showing where the fence would be located in the packet of information they all received. She believed the fence would not be highly visible from the street; the gate would be the most visible portion of the fence. Charles stated he may do a scallop top rather than a flat top on the fencing.

Maureen made a **MOTION** to **APPROVE** the Certificate of Appropriateness. The motion was seconded by Sally Faber and **CARRIED** by a vote of **4-0**.

Ginny asked Charles when he would obtain the fence permit. Charles believed it would be between June 3rd and June 8th. She told him the certificate would be in Construction Services by Thursday, June 4th.

Section 106 Review-611 Woodlawn

[The property in question has a house on it that the City is seeking permission to demolish.] Ginny stated the reason the City wanted to demolish the house was to save the neighborhood by removing a blighting influence. She stated the house is in very poor condition, and the owner has not been cooperating with the City or the Police Department. Maureen asked if the owner has ever been fined. Ginny replied the City and Police Department have been dealing with the owner for over a year. Ginny explained if the house was unsecured, vacant, abandoned and various other building violations, the City could pursue a fast-track demolition on it. The process

for a fast-track demolition includes notifying the owner and allowing 30 days to respond. If the owner does not respond the City can demolish the structure at the property. The Section 106 review is needed because federal funds would be used.

Mark McInnis asked if the property owner would still own the property. Ginny replied in most cases they would. Mark asked if there was any condemnation involved. Ginny replied there was not.

Ginny reminded the Commission their role was to decide if the house had historic value and to comment on the proposed demolition if they wished.

Ginny stated the house was very small and on a small lot. Some of the other homes in the neighborhood have been rehabilitated. The City is endeavoring to prevent the neighborhood from deteriorating. A lot of drug use has occurred in the building.

Laura stated the property is located between Winnebago Street and Rockton Avenue south of Whitman. Maureen stated homes in the neighborhood have a hard time gaining value with a property like this in the area. Ginny stated the cost to rehabilitate the property would exceed the value for the property.

Maureen asked if the property was torn down if anyone could get a permit to build something there, even something modern. Ginny replied that was true, but wasn't sure if the property was large enough to be built on. Ginny mentioned a lot of times small lots such as this would be offered to adjacent property owners.

Mark asked if there were other boarded-up properties in the area. Laura indicated there were a few within a few blocks of each other, all very different styles of homes. Mark asked if they were more historically significant than this property. Laura indicated the homes in this area did not have the same architectural style throughout the neighborhood and were more modest.

The Commission members agreed that the property may contribute to a historic district if there were one. However, because of its small size, the small lot, the condition of the home – including a stripped out interior – and location, there's not much chance of finding a new owner who would rehabilitate it. To protect other homes in the immediate area that have been taken care of, the Commission will not object to demolition of this one, although they have concerns about protecting other historic homes in the area. Ginny was instructed to convey this to IHPA.

OLD BUSINESS

Update on Violations – 400 block of Kishwaukee Street

Laura didn't notice any change on the property from last month. Ginny indicated the lawn has been mowed. She had taken photographs of the properties on May 29th and noticed a satellite dish on the roof of 401 Kishwaukee Street. She informed the property owner of this. He said it would be removed. He also indicated that paint had been tested on the backside of the property and preparation work toward painting will be done within the next week.

Update on Violations-904 North Prospect Street

Ginny stated no work had been started on this property. She met with City attorney John Giliberti regarding the property and he is preparing a summons on the violation items as a result. Ginny sent the weed complaint to Code Enforcement and there will be a code hearing in July. There is currently no siding on the house at all.

Maureen asked what was on the exterior of the property. Sally indicated nothing.

STAFF REPORT

Ginny stated she had been contacted by Pam Hein asking if the Commission had any plans to do any surveys this year, especially of newer (1920s to '50s) areas. Ginny went on to point out that some sort of survey needs to be done since it is a requirement for continuing Certified Local Government status and we have not done one in a few years. She contacted, pointing out that Pam had mentioned surveying Lustron homes as one possibility. These are early pre-fab metal solutions to homebuilding immediately after World War II. There is a Lustron home in Haight Village. Another option is portions of Kishwaukee Street from 16th Ave south to 20th Street. There were two houses in this area where Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) cut off part of the front porch steps to make room for the new sidewalk. Ginny recommended a survey in this area while the homes are still standing. Another survey suggestion would be for the Rolling Green area, Rockford's first suburb with curvilinear streets rather than the standard grid pattern.

Mark suggested either the Horsman/Cherry area or Ashland to Roosevelt to Whitman. Laura felt the Commission needed to decide whether it wants to document homes before demolition (as in Kishwaukee south of 15th Avenue), or document a potential district (such as Rolling Green). Sally asked about doing Sears homes.

On another matter, Ginny showed Commission members the latest issue of the National Trust's *Forum Journal* regarding green information. She offered to email it to any Commission members who wanted it.

Ginny contacted the Mayor's office regarding replacement Commission members. These would be to replace Laura, who has served the maximum two terms allowed, and Sally who is moving out of town.

With no further business, Maureen made a **MOTION** to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mark and **CARRIED** by a vote of 4-0.

Meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.